



Activity: Comforting Touch (15 minutes)

Activities that involve touching the body can be triggering for people who have experienced trauma. We offer the opportunity to touch a stone as an alternative for people who prefer not to touch their body. However, please consider carefully whether this meditation is the right choice for the people who would participate with you. One additional option is to use only the section with the stone and skip the section about touching the body.

Set-up: Information a facilitator could provide before leading the activity

1. The purpose of this exercise is to offer you a way to be with yourself and perhaps comfort yourself in difficult situations. Here we are practicing this like a meditation, but you could use it anywhere, for just a second or two, when you're having a hard time.
2. One way to support ourselves when we are not feeling our best is to offer ourselves comforting touch with our hands. This could be touching a stone or placing our hands gently on our body. Or, you might already have an object that you have used in this way, like a blanket. We are going to do this for several minutes, but it's a practice you could do in a few seconds as well. We talk about this as "compassion to go."
3. If there is fear or discomfort during the meditation, you can shift your meditation focus to sounds, feeling your feet on the ground, opening your eyes or taking a short break from the meditation.
4. Today we're going to work with a stone first. Then you'll have the option to set the stone down, and use your hands on your body for comforting or soothing, maybe thinking of the way you use your hands to comfort your child. I'll invite you to try placing your hands on different parts of your body--your cheeks, arms, crossing your arms, hands on your heart, on your belly, in your lap or on your thighs. You can do this with your eyes closed or open.

5. We recognize that it may be challenging to practice comforting touch, and we encourage you to find the line between discomfort and growth. If it feels like too much of a challenge today, please use the stone for both sections of the activity. If you feel like trying using your hands on your body, then in the second half of the meditation you can set the stone aside. This is meant to be a space to try new and potentially challenging things.
6. Any questions before we start?

Script

(Pass out stones)

Closing your eyes if you wish, take a moment to feel your feet on the floor. Let yourself take a few deep breaths.

Now notice yourself holding your stone.

- What is the texture of your stone? What is its temperature?
- Try holding it tighter, see how that feels.
- Now soften your hold on the stone.
- Try rubbing your stone with your fingers.
- Maybe turn your stone in your hand.
- Now hold your stone in your other hand.

Now you could broaden your attention to notice how your whole body feels in this moment.
(longer pause)

Now we are offering the choice to try using our hands on our body. If you would be more comfortable focusing on your stone, please feel free to continue touching the stone instead. If at any point you lose track of what to do with your stone or with your touch, you can just do whatever feels comforting to you.

For those of you using your hands for this meditation, please place the stone to the side and gently place one hand over your heart, simply feeling the gentle pressure and maybe the warmth of your hand.

- If you wish, place both hands over your heart. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and out. For those of you who are holding your stone, feel the warmth of your hands on the stone as you breathe in and out.

- For those of you who are using your hands, you may feel uneasy putting a hand over the heart. Feel free to explore where on your body a gentle touch is actually comforting.
- You could try placing one hand on your cheek or holding the stone in one hand.
- You might try cradling your face in your hands, or cradling your stone in both hands.
- You might try gently brushing your arms, or gently rolling your stone in your hand.
- You could place a hand or hands on your belly, or pass your stone from one hand to the other.
- You might place your hands on your thighs or rub your legs, or let your hands holding the stone rest in your lap.

If paying too much attention to your body is causing you to feel agitated, remember you can open your eyes at any point during the meditation. You can look up or shift your attention to your stone or something different, like something in the room.

Now that you've tried different kinds of connection, chose one with the stone or with hands on your body to hold for a few slow breaths. You might imagine offering this to yourself at some point during your day.

Whether you are working with your hands on your body or with a rock, gently coming back into the room.

This meditation was adapted by the Mindfulness and Compassion Program at Odessa Brown Children's Clinic in Seattle, Washington. The original version of this meditation, which does not include the use of a stone, is from the Mindful Self-Compassion curriculum designed by Dr. Kristin Neff and Dr. Christopher Germer. If you would like more information, please contact Kim Arthur at kimberly.arthur@seattlechildrens.org.